

THE DALTON PLAN V

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The Dalton Laboratory Plan lays the work of the school before the pupils in the form of a contract-job. The contract-job of anyone form is equivalent to a month's work in each of the subjects of the curriculum for that form. The separate subjects are outlined in the form of weekly assignments. As the Dalton Plan makes such a point of getting at school problems from the standpoint of the learner, the importance of the assignments will at once be appreciated—in fact the Plan hinges upon the assignment, for it is by means of the assignments that the pupil is given a view-point of his job as a whole, in all its parts, Schools have always regarded the making of assignments as important. However the mere fact that they are important does little for the pupil who has to fulfil the requirements, unless we can find a way to correct our practices---a way which will permit us to operate our good theories. A way must be found to check up the instructors assignments. The assignments should be a matter of general concern to the school as a whole. One has but to select, promiscuously, pupils from almost any class in a school, to find that the chief difficulties are largely, if not wholly, due to the fact that pupils have not a clear idea of what the instructor wants. If one pupil applies to another pupil he finds that each in turn has a different idea of what the instructor has said. Assignments are too hastily given as a matter of pages in a book, and are not clearly thought out. The instructor is apt to hold the pupil responsible for what he has in mind, even though he may not have spoken his mind. For anything as important as assignments impromptu speeches will never do, because few pupils are mind readers. There are often as many interpretations of an assignment as there are pupils in a class. Bits of an assignment given from day to day will never give the pupil any idea of "where the subject is going"—what it is leading up to, or why it is of the slightest importance to him. If an inexperienced traveller pressed for time had to read an entire book to find out how to get from London to Paris, he would probably in despair appeal to an agency to get him there. It is only human nature to take such a course. Pupils have many agencies at their command, and they pay the price in one way or another for help received—someone else may work the problem or write the composition. An instructor who has been taught to "call out the laggards" will often give a free passage to the pupil who sits on the front seat and beams with assumed intelligence. I say that stumbling assignments, poorly given, encourage this very thing. Every pupil is entitled to a well-thought-out, properly typed and duplicated assignment, expressed in the language native to him. He should be permitted a clear, straightforward view of his problem.

TEAM WORK BY THE STAFF

The prepared assignments will help in getting at still another problem, which is common to all schools. There is always at least one instructor who considers his own subject of such importance that he is ready to consume the whole of a pupil's time. He is so conscientious about his own work that he forgets that the pupil's job has to do with all the subjects of all the instructors. The Dalton Plan requires that *all* the assignments be written out a month *in* advance, and that each assignment be subdivided into four weekly assignments.

This permits the pupil the satisfaction which always comes when one has completed a single unit of a longer problem, and enables him to mark his progress step by step as he goes. These assignments are laid out for the inspection of all the teachers a week before they are put on the notice boards for the pupils. In this way the assignments become a school problem to be

shared by all.

For the well-being of the school it is necessary that every instructor be intelligent about the entire work of the school. The assignments show how the work can be correlated. If a particularly interesting theme is assigned for science or history, the English teacher will find it good material for compositions, or debate, or oral discussion. The head of every school should make it clear to each instructor that the importance of his own special subject in the school will depend upon the way in which he presents it to the other instructors and to what extent he interests them in it.

Let us take the subject of art for an example. Art belongs to the school, not just to the art instructor. If it is merely work done in the studio, to be seen at the time of the annual exhibit, it is dead. It should be felt in every department—but how can every department make use of it if the art teacher is not responsible for interesting the other instructors? Instructors spend too much time *in* trying to appeal to their pupils to do more of a special subject. They often explain how valuable this special subject is *to* the world, and so on. I believe that such methods are a waste of time and energy. Instructors must make themselves felt among the other instructors and get each one of the staff to appreciate the importance of allying their subject with the others; They must, as coworkers, appeal to each other, not to the pupils, because, as a group, it is the instructors themselves who are responsible for changes in a curriculum, changes in correlation, all of which means a change in attitude and appreciation. I know a school run on the Dalton Plan where the geography teacher requires special - notebooks that can be made only in the art room: When the director of this same art room is working on a problem in household XXXXX ends the pupils to the hand work room to do the necessary initial work, which, when complete is brought back to the studio. This sort of correlation is possible because there is a sort of understanding between the heads of departments, and because the art instructor knows what is required in geography and the other subjects. If for instance, planets are, under discussion in the geography laboratory, the mathematics instructor can find splendid colouring for the problems in arithmetic or algebra. A form teacher has *not* at her command, enough ready knowledge to make it possible to correlate subjects properly. She might partially correlate some subjects, but when a group of specialists accept the problem as a common one, they will find that it is much easier, that their subject is more popular, and that they increase their own body of general knowledge.

NATURAL CORRELATION

The task of individual pupils is lightened when they can see the inter-relation of subjects. The community life brought about by the interaction of groups under the Dalton laboratory plan emphasizes the correlation of subjects.

A pupil working on a phase of history can go immediately to the English laboratory to write up his discoveries as an English requirement. The pupil who is more interested in science than any other subject will take pleasure *in* extending his knowledge of science. He can be interested in other subjects if he can see them linked to his interest. As a part of his science assignment such a pupil should be required to go to the mathematics laboratory to do that portion of science work relating to mathematics. After writing his experiments he should have them corrected by the English instructor before handing them in to the science instructor. In such an instance the English instructor should give him credit for his written work as an English equivalent. It is well for the school generally, and for the pupils in particular, to discover that individual instructors are interested in and know something about other subjects as well as their own.

The idea is not to feed the pupil with subject capsules or give an over-dose of any one, but to help him to fulfil his contract as a job, and to round him out and give him a broad general education. Each instructor must put the emphasis upon *the pupil in his entire work*. They must

realize, just as the pupil does, that he had contracted not one subject but several/ and they must see not progress in a single subject but progress in the work of a whole contract, under the Dalton plan an assignment is not given as a subject-occupation, but to indicate a method of attack upon the portions of the contract.

It helps a child to see his work in its general relations, and gets him away from unimportant details. The child forgets to look for flattery along the line of his strength, and views his progress from a more general stand point.

THE LINE OF INTEREST

In making assignments, we should, take the pupils' interests into consideration. When one instructor, discovers a special interest on the part of a pupil he communicates it to the staff who then have a real, clue to the boy or girl problem.

Any one assignment is not a formal statement of a certain number of pages to be read in a given text or reference book. Instead it is more in the nature, of a syllabus which points out ground to be covered, indicates, references that will be found useful, points of difficulty to be noted, and gives lists of questions to be answered. When written work is expected it should be so stated as a requirement and a proper equivalent given. We try to create what I call "interest pockets" in the assignments. We make good use of all the psychology we can command. Instead, of saying "Read such and such references", enumerating them, we say "You will find it interesting or you will find it helpful, to read such and such references". An "interest pocket" is a statement which catches a child's attention. It gives life to the assignment. Instead of preparing a plan to be followed in, presenting a subject to the pupils, the instructor now prepare plans for the pupils to use in attacking the part of a contract, attempting to get at the contract from the standpoint of the learner.

In a mathematics' assignment the instructor can say "After you have, finished the problems required, come to me and I will explain the next rule to you before you go on. The assignments can be used almost as an assistant teacher, if the instructor will create but "interest pockets." And conceive of ways", which will not only state the requirements, but will also interest the learner. The learner will appreciate all instructions that facilitate his progress. If questions are asked which arouse his curiosity and, suspend his interest so as not to do the work for him but to inspire him to do it, then an "interest, pocket" has been made. These interest pockets are important because it is of more value to stimulate the pupil by interesting subject matter than to forced or over-stimulate him with the teacher's personality.

ACTUAL ASSIGNMENTS

The point to be kept in mind is that the pupil wants to know something, and the question is, how can he be helped in getting at it. The pupil must not only be informed of the difficulties of a given portion of the subject, but must also be told in the assignment what the instructor expects of him.

For purposes of illustration I will give some assignments. The first one given is a history assignment used by pupils of Form I, in the Children's University School, New York City. The pupils averaged 10 years of age. I give the month's assignment in English history of their second contract. This assignment was typed on four sheets of paper, one sheet for each week's assignment. The four sheets were fastened to a yellow card; the colour yellow having been chosen to indicate all requirements for Form I. This assignment was hung on the notice board outside the history laboratory, together with the history requirements for the other forms.

HISTORY
FORM I, SECOND CONTRACT
FIRST WEEK

Last month we read and studied about the Norman Kings of England. This month we are going to learn about some more of the Kings of England. The group we are now about to study are called Plantagenets. That is a long name, and may be hard to remember until you find out first what it means. That will be one of the tasks this first week. In the assignment you can, find out what it means.

Here are the stories for you to read. I think you will like them, for they are interesting and exciting. After I indicate the stories to be read, I am going to put down some questions and things to do. The reading will count for one day's work, and the questions are one day's work each.

How the Normans lived	Short Stories from English History
Story of Fair Rosamond	Story of the English
Thomas à Becket	Story of the English and England's history, p.66-71
The murder of Thomas à Becket	Story of the English and England's history, p.71-72

Questions and problems:

1. Draw a map showing England's possessions in the time of Henry II. (England's Story, p. 64). (Show in colours the English possessions and the kingdom of France.)
2. Suppose you are a reporter on the London Daily Chronicle at the time of the murder of Thomas à Becket. Write an account for your paper telling of the quarrel between Thomas à Becket and the King and the murder of the former. Make this account short and interesting.
3. How did the Normans live? What does Plantagenet mean ?
4. Tell the story of Fair Rosamond.

Show all this Work to me before you mark it up on your cards and do this also with all the written work.

SECOND WEEK

This week we are going to read about one of the most famous kings of England, Richard the Lion-Hearted. He was the son of Henry II, whom we studied about last week. The books we shall read are as follows:

Story of the English .. Pages 106-107

England's Story .. Pages 76-81.

Below you will find five questions to answer and write up. The reading and question will count as one day's work, and the other four questions will count for the other four days of the week.

1. What is a Crusade ?
2. Describe King Richard the Lion-Hearted.
3. Why did Richard fail in his Crusade ?
- 4- Tell the story of Richard's return trip to England after he left the Holy Land.
5. Tell the story of the death of Richard.

THIRD WEEK.

King Richard had no children, so when he died there was great wondering who should be king. The crown rightfully belonged to Prince Arthur, the nephew of Richard. This week we shall read about this unfortunate prince, and see where the crown really went. We shall also read about a great document that means very much to the English people to-day, and about another King, Henry III. Below I shall give the stories to be read. You will notice that I have given references in several books. You do not need to read all the books, unless you need to find out the answers to the questions given below. There are five questions. Each question and the reading necessary to answer it count as a day's work.

The sad story of the little prince Arthur	Short Stories from English History; Story of the English, p. 117; England's Story, p. 82
The Great Charter	Short Stories from English History, p. 75-77; Story of the English, p. 119; England's Story, p. 84-87
Henry III	Story of the English, p. 124-128; England's Story, p. 88-93

Questions:

1. What relation was John to Richard ? Why did he become king ?
2. Why was Arthur killed ? Tell the story.
3. Why is the Magna Charta important ?
4. What kind' of king was Henry III ?
5. Tell the story of the signing of the Magna Charta.

FOURTH WEEK

We all know that the oldest son of the King of England is called the Prince of Wales. We saw Edward, Prince, of Wales, when he visited New York. He has many friends in our country. I wonder if we know why he is called this and know the story of the first Prince of Wales. That is one of the things we shall read about this week. We shall also read about the trouble and wars between England and Scotland and the wars between England and France. The books to read are given below. When you have finished your reading, please come to me before you mark up your cards and tell me the stories that you have read. There will be no written work to do this week.

The first Prince Of Wales	Story of the English, p. 131-134
The Coronation Stone	Story of the English
Bruce and the Spider	Story of the English
The Black Prince at the Battle of Crecy	Short Stories from English History; Story of the English, p. 152-155

The following is the first week of an assignment for children of nine years of age who were studying Ancient History.

ANCIENT HISTORY
SECOND CONTRACT
FIRST WEEK

Last month we read how the Greeks fought against the Persians and drove them out of Greece. No doubt you all remember the Battle of Marathon and the Battle of Salamis: After the Persian Wars were all over, and the Persians had decided that they could not conquer the Greeks, the Greeks went back to their homes. You remember the Athenians had had their homes all burned by the Persians just before the Battle of Salamis, so they had to start to build their city all over again.

The Spartans were jealous of the Athenians, so they did all they could to keep the Athenians from rebuilding their city. They were afraid that the Athenians would become the most important people in Greece. The Athenians, however, succeeded in getting their city rebuilt. They soon got into trouble with the Spartans, who were still very jealous. Finally this trouble ended in a long, and cruel war between the two cities. This is what you shall read about this week. Read the story called "Beginning of the Peloponnesian War " in " The Story of the Greeks." This war was called the Peloponnesian War because Sparta was in it, and Sparta was in the part of Greece called the Peloponnesus.

When you have finished the reading, write out the answers to the following questions :

1. Who fought in the Peloponnesian War ?
2. Why did the two countries fight ?
3. How did Pericles explain the eclipse of the Sun? (The above is two day's work.)

We shall also read about the death of Pericles, the great leader of the Athenians. Write the answers to these questions when you have finished.

1. What caused the death of Pericles ?
2. What was said about the way Pericles found the city and the way he left it? (This is one day's work.)

The third story to read this week is called "Greek Colonies in Italy". You will find the pages by looking in the index. You will find out about some of the Greek cities in Italy and Sicily. Look on the map in the front of the book and see where the cities are. You will be interested to see how the people in some of the cities loved comfort and luxury. You will also find out about how the Athenians planned a great expedition to attack some of the cities in Sicily.

Write the answers to the following questions :

1. Tell a story to show how the Sybarites liked comfort.
2. Who were the leaders of the Athenian fleet ?
3. What was Alcibiades accused of? (This is two day's work.)

Be sure to bring all your written answers to me before you mark up your work.

I will give two literature assignments. They are given in monthly units instead of in weekly portion, because each assignment has to do with a single book under discussion. Both are for Form II. children who were eleven and twelve years of age. Note that although they are consecutive assignments for the same form each one treats the book to be read in a different way. The new treatment in itself may be considered an "interest pocket". Note how the literature is correlated with the English composition and also note that equivalents are given, so that a child may stop before finishing a book if he desires.

LITERATURE
FORM II. FOURTH CONTRACT

This month we shall read a book by Kipling, "Captains Courageous." It is an exciting story of the life of the brave fishermen on the Grand Banks Newfoundland. I am sure you will like it. I am sure you will like Harvey and Van and all the others. When you get through reading the story, instead of writing a book report on it, I am going to give you some subjects about which to write short stories.

Here are the subjects. Bring the stories to me after you have finished them. I will correct them and approve them.

1. Suppose you were a reporter on the Gloucester Daily Herald. You hear about the adventure of Harvey and Dan with the dead Frenchman. Write this story up as an account for a newspaper. Be sure to make it interesting, for that is the most important thing about a newspaper story.

2. Suppose you were Harvey on board the "We're Here," after he had been there a month. Write a letter to your mother telling your experiences during that time. Tell her just how you feel, imagining all the time that you are Harvey. I think you can easily imagine his feelings as you write.

FORM II. FIFTH CONTRACT.

Our reading this month will be "Rob Roy" by Sir Walter Scott. The reading will count as three weeks' work.

The fourth week's work will be to write a book review of "Rob Roy." This is different from the book reports you have written before. This review is the kind of thing you find in the "Literary Digest". The purpose of these reviews is to enable people to tell from reading the reviews, whether or not they wish to read the book. These are the things that should go into a book review.

1. Put down the full title, and the name of the author.

2. Put down the name of the publisher, and the number of pages in the book. (This will enable the reader to know where to get the book, and how large a book it is.)

3. Give a short account of the story, putting in only the important facts.

4. Tell what you think of the book. Tell whether or not you like it and why.

Bring your review to me when you have finished.

NO MORE SPOON-FEEDING.

We must not limit the pupil by chaining him to our ideas, but we must set him free to make discoveries and permit him to have ideas of his own. The business of the school is not to entertain pupils, nor to "spoon-feed" them. The business of the school is to help pupils to get at the meaning of work, to help them to learn how to work. By permitting them real jobs sufficient to challenge their mental powers, and to realize that even if their responsibilities are carried awkwardly in the beginning, later, with experience, they are dispatched with ease. We must fit boys and girls to take their places in society—that means fitting them to take the places we occupy. Society wants its members to be experienced. The best thing we can do in our schools is to give opportunities which provide experience. We cannot lend our experiences to pupils and expect them to be helped thereby. We must assist life forces in their expression and encourage expression in all directions. We must not do the work for the pupil. But we must light the torch to kindle his force.

The instructor of a subject laboratory does not stand with his back glued to the wall. He observes the comings and goings, he knows the pupils intimately, and he becomes intimately acquainted with the pupils' real difficulties. He finds them often different from those he had previously supposed. Like a good doctor, he does not devote himself exclusively to a patient

who is slightly indisposed, but rather gives the greater part of his time and attention in assisting those who most need his help. Teachers must realize that they have had their opportunity for development; that they are not the chief performers on the school stage; that they have matured to a degree that demands dignity of behaviour; that they must listen more and tell less ; that they must observe rather than continually demonstrate; that it is the pupil who is to do and the teacher who is to suggest and encourage; that the height of achievement is for pupils to be more interested in subjects than in teachers, because subjects and not teachers are the chief business of the learner ; that teachers must dictate less ; that they should be less analytical, and always remember that it is not what we give a pupil, but what he contributes, that assists and measures his development (To be continued.)